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Statement submitted by Hydroaid, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Today, more than ever, administrations are called to focus on environmental and development issues, despite critical financial and political conditions. However, the real possibility of adopting policies that concretely address environmental crisis, fight climate change or match development needs, is limited. Local institutions, in particular, tend to be motivated only under considerable pressure. More frequently, dealing with major environmental problems requires large investments of time and money, although it produces benefits that will be measured for generations to come.

Hydroaid's mission is to contribute to efficient, integrated and sustainable water resources management through training and capacity-building in areas characterized by severe environmental and climate vulnerabilities. Our experience, as an Association composed of both public and private members, provides us with insights on the processes that link commitments on water cooperation to actions, and actions to results, within different institutions. This point of view brought us to formulate 4 directions where steps can be made to facilitate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, with special regard to Goal 6:

1. Empowering participation opportunities for local groups in the formulation of development policies. Enhanced engagement and a sense of responsibility for the entities involved, and of the administrations that must coordinate them, derive from feeling a part of a larger forum and has positive effects on the improvement of living standards through the protection and effective management of threatened natural resources.

2. Targeting beneficiaries in an effective way to include all interests and needs, stimulate community participation and a sense of project ownership that facilitates cooperation efforts. Appropriately targeted groups become active in the decision making and development processes of their local environment. Better management of natural resources begins from better management of human resources and their ability to disseminate know-how. Targeting can be improved through monitoring and impact evaluation, particularly by the implementation of circular feedback-harvesting systems where the inputs collected are used to increase future efficiency and commitment.

3. Improving communication among experts in support of capacity development where interdisciplinary expertise and integrated approaches allow knowledge-sharing, which is transformed into skills that are, in turn, converted into actions.

4. Promoting jobs for sustainability as a goal for supporting both employment and natural resources governance, two sectors facing sustainability challenges that could find at least a partial solution in the activation of such a loop system. Water resources and sanitation are areas where investments could be greatly developed and bring even greater advantages, turning a weakness into strength. Professional training, especially, is the tool that paves the way for new jobs where the acquired skills find a concrete application, thus completing the circle.

Policies for sustainability can drive institutions towards better management of resources and communities. Similarly, individuals orient their behaviors according to a shared vision that can be inspired by them. Solid administrations with the support and engagement of local communities, public/private partnerships and stakeholders are more likely to withstand the shocks and pressures caused by human or environmental causes while contributing to the SDGs.